

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ADDIS 12616 301027Z
ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 NEA-10 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2163
INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDAA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 12616

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, FR, ET, FT
SUBJ: TFAI - VISIT OF FRENCH SECRETARY OF STATE, MOFA

REF: PARIS 37089

1. PIERRE TAITTINGER, SECRETARY OF STATE, FRENCH MOFA,
VISITED ADDIS DEC 20-22 TO DISCUSS TFAI PROBLEMS WITH EPMG.
VISIT RECEIVED MODEST PUBLICITY. ETHIOPIAN HERALD SAID
TAITTINGER "BRIEFED ETHIOPIANS ON ARRANGEMENTS FRANCE IS
MAKING TO TRANSFER POWER OF GOVERNMENT TO REPS OF PEOPLE OF
DJIBOUTI. FRANCH HAS SCHEDULED...A REFERENDUM IN DJIBOUTI
NEXT MARCH AND (WILL) ALSO ORGANIZE ELECTIONS FOR A
CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY THAT WOULD DRAFT THE FIRST CONSTITUTION
OF INDEPENDENT DJIBOUTI."

2. ACCORDING FRENCH AMBASSADOR BIRBIER, EPMG FONMIN
KIFLE WODAJO DIS MOST, IF NOT ALL, THE TALING FOR EPMG.
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PAGE 02 ADDIS 12616 301027Z

MEETING WITH PMAC CHAIRMAN BG TEFERI BANTI WAS ENVISIONED,
BUT NEVER CAME OFF. CHAIRMAN WAS COMPLETELY TIED UP
WITH MEETINGS DURING MOST OF TAITTINGER'S STAY AND WHEN
FINALLY MEETING WAS ARRANGED FOR EVENING DEC 22, TAITTINGER
ALREADY HAD MEETING SET WITH OAU SEC GEN ETEKI.

3. BARBIER CHARACTERIZED MEETINGS WITH KIFLE AS "GOOD". FIRST DAY WAS CHIEFLY RUNDOWN OF BACKGROUND TO TFAI PROBLEM, SECOND WAS DEVOTED TO DISCUSSION OF POSITIONS. KIFLE WAS WELL INFORMED AND GENERALLY RELAXED. (RUMOR CIRCULATING AROUND DIP CORPS NEVERTHELESS HAS MEETINGS AS BEING "HOT AND HEAVY.") NOTHING PARTICULARLY NEW EMERGED FROM DISCUSSIONS, BUT BARBIER FELT THAT ETHIOPIANS NOW HAVE BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT FRENCH ARE TRYING TO DO AND THAT WHILE ETHIOPIANS AND FRENCH MAY DIFFER SOMEWHAT IN TACTICS OF SITUATION, THEY DO GENERALLY AGREE ON BROAD PRINCIPLES. BARBIER ALSO THOUGHT ETHIOPIAN SUSPICION THAT FRENCH WERE TILTING TOWARD SOMALIA MAY HAVE BEEN DISSIPATED.

4. IN DISCUSSING GENERAL SITUATION, BARBIER OFFERED FOLLOWING COMMENTS:

A. ETHIOPIAN DIPLOMACY DURING FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 1976 WAS "BRILLIANT", CULMINATING IN RESOLUTION PASSED AT MAURITIUS OAU HEADS OF STATE MEETING IN EARLY JULY. AT THAT TIME, ETHIOPIA PROBABLY COULD HAVE COUNTED ON SUPPORT OF A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF OAU STATES.

B. SINCE THEN, HOWEVER, ETHIOPIA HAS LOST GROUND BY TRYING TO PUSH TOO HARD. ETHIOPIA HAD PINNED ITS HOPES ON ALI AREF, AND HAS SEEMINGLY BEEN UNABLE GRASP FACT THAT ALI AREF IS NO LONGER POLITICAL FORCE IN TFAI. ONLY DURING TAITTINGER VISIT DID BARBIER DETECT SIGN THAT ETHIOPIANS MAY FINALLY BE GIVING UP ON ALI AREF (A VERY TENTATIVE BARBIER CONCLUSION). ELECTION OF NEW
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PAGE 03 ADDIS 12616 301027Z

UNI (NATIONAL UNION FOR INDEPENDENCE) OFFICIALS (ADDIS 12543) MAY BE STRAW IN WIND. BARBIER DID NOT KNOW WHO NEW PEOPLE WERE EXCEPT FOR NEW PRESIDENT, AHMED YOUSSEF HOUMED, WHO HE CHARACTERIZED AS "ETHIOPIA'S MAN," BUT WHO NEVERTHELESS WAS MAN OF SOME SUBSTANCE.

C. BARBIER ALSO THOUGHT TFAI RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY UNGA IN NOVEMBER WAS "BAD RESOLUTION." FRENCH HAD HOPED IT WOULD BE PRO FORMA AND COULD BE DISPOSED OF IN FOUR OR FIVE DAYS. ETHIOPIANS, HOWEVER, PERSISTENTLY STALLED DEBATE IN AN EFFORT TO INTRODUCE WIDER PROBLEM OF SOMALI CLAIMS IN HORN WHICH THEY OTHERWISE COULDN'T HAVE DONE. OTHER AFRICANS WERE NOT PREPARED GO BEYOND MAURITIUS RESOLUTION. RESULT WAS CONFUSION IN DRAFTING, EXCESSIVE DEBATE WHICH INCLUDED SPLIT IN UNI RANKS, AND EROSION OF AFRICAN SUPPORT FOR ETHIOPIAN POSITION.

D. TIPOFF ON ETHIOPIAN POSITION MAY EMERGE DURING

JANUARY MEETING OF TFAI POLITICAL ELEMENTS IN PARIS FROM
OBSERVATION OF UNI ROLE, IF ANY.

E. ETHIOPIANS HAVE CONSISTENTLY MADE MISTAKE IN
REFUSING ABDELLAH KAMIL ANY KIND OF RECOGNITION. BARBIER
HIMSELF URGED KIFLE SEND AT LEAST SIMPLE MESSAGE OF
CONGRATULATIONS AT TIME OF KAMIL'S APPOINTMENT, BUT
KIFLE REFUSED, AND HAS SINCE REFUSED INVITE HIM TO ADDIS
(TAITTINGER APPARENTLY RETURNED TO THIS POINT DURING
DISCUSSIONS WITH KIFLE).

F. AFARS DO NOT REALLY WANT INDEPENDENCE. TRADI-
TIONAL AFAR CHIEFS DO NOT SUPPORT ALI AREF. THEY DID
SO ONLY WHEN HE "REPRESENTED FRANCE." AS RESULT, UNI
NEVER WAS REAL POLITICAL PARTY.

5. BARBIER CONCLUDED BY SAYING FRENCH BELIEVE "ONLY WAY"
TFAI CAN BE SUCCESSFULLY INDEPENDENT IS A) FOR INTERNATIONAL
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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 ADDIS 12616 301027Z

ORGANIZATIONS (UN AND OAU WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO
UN SECURITY COUNCIL) TO OFFER SOME KIND OF INTER-
NATIONAL ASSURANCES RE INDEPENDENCE, AND B) FOR PEOPLE
OF TFAI TO FORM A COHESIVE COALITION. POPULATION OF
240,000 IS TOO SMALL TO TOLERATE POLITICAL DIVISIONS
(APPARENTLY THEY MADE THESE POINTS AS WELL TO ETHIOPIANS).
IN THIS, FRENCH GENERALLY AGREED WITH ETHIOPIANS THAT
SOME KIND OF "GUARANTEES" ARE NECESSARY. SOMALIA MADE
CLEAR THAT ITS SUPPORT FOR UNGA RESOLUTION WAS FOR ITS
DECOLONIZATION CONTENT. AFTER INDEPENDENCE, TFAI WAS
FREE TO DO WHAT IT WISHED.
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